

## LAFFEY MATRIX – 2014-2015

Years (Rate for June 1 – May 31, based on prior year's CPI-U)

Experience	14-15
20+ years	520
11-19 years	460
8-10 years	370
4-7 years	300
1-3 years	255
Paralegals & Law Clerks	150

*Explanatory Notes:*

1. This matrix of hourly rates for attorneys of varying experience levels and paralegals/law clerks has been prepared by the Civil Division of the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. The matrix is intended to be used in cases in which a "fee-shifting" statute permits the prevailing party to recover "reasonable" attorney's fees. *See, e.g.*, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(k) (Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act); 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E) (Freedom of Information Act); 28 U.S.C. § 2412(b) (Equal Access to Justice Act). The matrix does **not** apply to cases in which the hourly rate is limited by statute. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2412(d).
2. This matrix is based on the hourly rates allowed in *Laffey v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.*, 572 F. Supp. 354 (D.D.C. 1983), *aff'd in part, rev'd in part on other grounds*, 746 F.2d 4 (D.C. Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 472 U.S. 1021 (1985). It is commonly referred to by attorneys and federal judges in the District of Columbia as the "Laffey Matrix" or the "United States Attorney's Office Matrix." The various "brackets" in the column headed "Experience" refer to the years following the attorney's graduation from law school, and are intended to correspond to "junior associates" (1-3 years after law school graduation), "senior associates" (4-7 years), "experienced federal court litigators" (8-10 and 11-19 years), and "very experienced federal court litigators" (20 years or more). Thus, the "1-3 years" bracket is generally applicable to attorneys in their first, second, and third years after graduation from law school, and the "4-7 years" bracket generally becomes applicable on the *intra* anniversary of the attorney's graduation (*i.e.*, at the beginning of the fourth year following law school). *See Laffey*, 572 F. Supp. at 371; *but cf. EPIC v. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, No. 11-2261, \_\_\_ F. Supp. 2d \_\_\_, 2013 WL 6047561, \*6 -\*7 (D.D.C. Nov. 15, 2013) (attorney not admitted to bar compensated at "Paralegals & Law Clerks" rate); *EPIC v. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 982 F. Supp.2d 56, 60-61 (D.D.C. 2013) (same).
3. The hourly rates approved in *Laffey* were for work done principally in 1981-82. The matrix begins with those rates. *See Laffey*, 572 F. Supp. at 371 (attorney rate) & 386 n.74 (paralegal and law clerk rate). The rates for subsequent yearly periods were determined by adding the change in the cost of living for the Washington, D.C. area to the applicable rate for the prior year, and then rounding to the nearest multiple of \$5 (up if within \$3 of the next multiple of \$5). The result is subject to adjustment if appropriate to ensure that the relationship between the highest rate and the lower rates remains reasonably constant. Changes in the cost of living are measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV, as announced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for May of each year.
4. Use of an updated Laffey Matrix was implicitly endorsed by the Court of Appeals in *Save Our Cumberland Mountains v. Hodel*, 857 F.2d 1516, 1525 (D.C. Cir. 1988) (en banc). The Court of Appeals subsequently stated that parties may rely on the updated Laffey Matrix prepared by the United States Attorney's Office as evidence of

prevailing market rates for litigation counsel in the Washington, D.C. area. *See Covington v. District of Columbia*, 57 F.3d 1101, 1105 & n.14, 1109 (D.C. Cir. 1995), *cert. denied*, 516 U.S. 1115 (1996). Most lower federal courts in the District of Columbia have relied on the United States Attorney's Office Matrix, rather than the so-called "Updated Laffey Matrix," as the "benchmark for reasonable fees" in this jurisdiction. *Miller v. Holzmann*, 575 F. Supp. 2d 2, 18 n.29 (D.D.C. 2008) (quoting *Pleasants v. Ridge*, 424 F. Supp. 2d 67, 71 n.2 (D.D.C. 2006)); *see, e.g., Berke v. Bureau of Prisons*, 942 F. Supp. 2d 71, 77 (D.D.C. 2013); *Heller v. District of Columbia*, 832 F. Supp. 2d 32, 40-49 (D.D.C. 2011); *American Lands Alliance v. Norton*, 525 F. Supp. 2d 135, 150 (D.D.C. 2007). *But see Salazar v. District of Columbia*, 123 F. Supp. 2d 8, 14-15 (D.D.C. 2000). The United States Attorney's Office does not use the "Updated Laffey Matrix" to determine whether fee awards under fee shifting statutes are reasonable.

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